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Social Service for Children

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THE WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL UNION

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SOCIAL SERVICE FOR CHILDREN
AS A
VOCATION FOR WOMEN

PREPARED BY
THE APPOINTMENT BUREAU
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This series of bulletins is based upon information obtained in connection with the actual placement of women in business positions. In no case has the subject been approached from the viewpoint of theoretical research.

The information is somewhat fragmentary and local in character, yet it has been adjudged by several experts to give an accurate and fair statement of existing conditions.

Later editions of the bulletins may be able to give wider information in regard to conditions outside New England.

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1. PROBATION WORK.
2. ADVERTISING.
3. HOME AND SCHOOL VISITING.
4. PUBLISHING HOUSE WORK.
5. POULTRY RAISING.
6. PROOF READING.
7. REAL ESTATE.
8. INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTRY.
9. BACTERIOLOGICAL WORK.
10. INTERIOR DECORATION.
11. MEDICAL SOCIAL SERVICE.
12. ORGANIZING CHARITY.
13. SOCIAL SERVICE FOR CHILDREN.
14. SETTLEMENT WORK.

The price of each bulletin is ten cents.

SOCIAL SERVICE FOR CHILDREN AS A VOCATION FOR WOMEN

I. SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

Interviews with fifty social workers who are now engaged in work for various social agencies in Boston. Of these, twenty are at present engaged in some form of work for children.

2. THE OCCUPATION: ITS NATURE AND SCOPE.

The work for children is usually done by special organizations, which try to meet the needs of particular classes of children or of individuals, treating them as far as possible in relation to the family problem.

The work naturally has many ramifications, and in many cases is very highly specialized. It may be divided into three groups: (a) Special Care for Children Away from Their Own Homes; (b) Special Schools for Particular Groups of Children; (c) Special Forms of Summer Work for Children.

a. SPECIAL CARE OF CHILDREN. (Away from their own homes.)

This group includes the work of the State, the city, and of private organizations for dependent, delinquent, defective, and neglected children.

(1) *The placing-out work.*

The most recent method of caring for children away from their own homes is to place or board them in private families, where they will receive the same kind of attention which is naturally given to a child in its own home. The work of the child-placing agencies is done by

(a) Investigators.

When a case is reported to a child-placing agency by an individual or a charitable organization, an investigator at once looks into the case.

If the Confidential Exchange shows

that no other agency is already at work, visits to the home, to relatives and others who have known the family, enable the investigator to decide

1 — Whether the child may still be cared for in its own home or by relatives. In this case she may make plans for the entire family, or she may seek the interest of an agency whose duties are with the family.

2 — Whether the child shall be cared for away from its home. In this case she recommends that the case be accepted by a society. (Each society usually has a special case committee, which acts as an advisory body with the investigator, and which finally passes upon all cases recommended.)

The investigator continues in close touch with the family problem after the child is accepted, and determines when conditions in the home are such that the child should be returned.

(b) Visitor or Placing Agent.

The work of the visitor is twofold:

1 — With the homes where children are placed.

When a family wishes to receive children as boarders or for adoption, it is required to register with the society, and to give references which may be carefully investigated. The visitor makes independent inquiries, and if these are favorable, visits the home. If up to a standard required by the society, it is added to the approved list and used as soon as a child that fits the home is accepted.

2 — With the child.

A special visitor is assigned to each child accepted by the society. Her duties are to take the child to the home where she is to be boarded, and thereafter, as long as the child remains a charge of the society, to visit her, if possible, once a month. She sees the child alone and tries to win her confidence and affection. She talks with the foster mother, discussing clothes, school, discipline, and all problems connected with the child. She visits the school and talks with the teacher about the child. If necessary, she takes the child to a physician to see that eyes, nose, teeth, etc., receive proper attention. When necessary, also, she buys the clothes for the child.

In short, she becomes the person who is responsible for the child's well being. (Little boys as well as girls are often assigned to the care of the visitor.)

(2) *Homes for children.*

(a) Temporary homes.

These are open to children of a certain age when the illness of the mother or some other member of the family makes it necessary or advisable to relieve the mother temporarily of the care of her children. Children may be received for periods of time varying from one week to two or three months. Children who have been reported to the child-placing agencies are often sent to the temporary homes pending the investigation.

Sometimes the children are sent to the public schools, or a kindergarten is maintained in the home. An effort is made

to make the life as homelike as possible.
The work is carried on by

1 — The Superintendent or Matron who has general charge of the house, of buying supplies for the household, of choosing her assistants, and in some cases of deciding what children shall be admitted to the home.

2 — Investigators.

Some homes have a regular paid investigator to look up all cases which apply for admission to the home, and to keep watch over the children when they return to their homes. This work is very similar to that done by the investigator in the child-placing agencies.

3 — Nurses.

In some cases graduate nurses are employed in the temporary homes to look after the children and be on hand in case of illness, but more often the nurses have had no regular training, but are experienced in dealing with children.

4 -- Teachers.

Some homes maintain a regular kindergarten under trained workers; but more often a teacher of experience is employed to teach the younger children and to play with them while the older ones are in school.

(b) Day nurseries.

These are very similar in their organization to the temporary homes for children. The aim is to receive children whose mothers are forced to work, at least a part of the time, in order to support the family, either because of the illness or the death of the father. Children are cared for in the nursery during the day,

or, if old enough, are sent to school, and return after school hours to remain until the mother returns from her work.

The workers here are the same as in the temporary homes for children.

(c) Institutions.

Formerly many children whose parents, for various reasons, were unable to care for them at home, were placed in institutions or children's homes. This method of caring for children has largely been replaced by the more modern method of boarding them in private families, but many of the institutions still continue at the present time.

The workers are the same as in the temporary homes for children.

b. SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN.

This group includes the schools caring for particular groups of children who have some special handicap which makes it impossible for them to attend the regular schools. The work includes schools for the crippled and deformed, the deaf, the blind, the schools for the epileptic and feeble-minded, and the correctional schools.

(I) *Nature of the work.*

The work in these schools is both academic and industrial. For the younger children, regular lessons are taught, the emphasis being on small classes and more time allowed to the individual child than is possible with normal children. When the children are old enough, they are taught some form of industry which will make them in part self-supporting.

The teachers include regular grade teachers who work with small classes in elementary subjects, and special teachers who have charge of the industrial classes in such subjects as basket weaving, cobbling, fine

needlework, embroidery, printing, piano tuning, rug weaving, etc.

(2) *Opportunities for social work.*

The work of the teacher in some of the specialized schools includes a close knowledge of the conditions in the homes of the children. The teacher often is able to get into the home and help the entire family to secure better living conditions.

In some schools a regular visitor is employed who devotes her entire time to the work in the homes, while in others practically no home work is attempted.

c. SPECIAL FORMS OF SUMMER WORK FOR CHILDREN.

The summer work for children includes three types of work: the Fresh Air Work, the Vacation Schools, and the Playground Work.

(1) *The Fresh Air work.*

This work is confined to the summer months, and is carried on by private support.

(a) The Children's Country Week.

In order that there may be less duplication of the summer work, the matter of arranging summer outings for children and mothers is left largely in the hands of one organization. Social workers from the settlements, dispensaries, districts, etc., send in lists of names of children who should be given vacations.

1 — Nature of the work.

The work of the Children's Country Week includes finding homes in the country villages or on farms where children may be sent, keeping closely in touch with all these to see that the conditions are up to the standard; arranging racially congenial groups of children for

different parties ; making arrangements with the railroad companies regarding rates ; making out schedules for various parties to arrive and for others to leave certain farms ; appointing volunteers to conduct parties of children and bring back other parties from the same farm ; sending the necessary information to the farms to which children are to be sent, and to the children who are to make up the party.

2 — The workers.

The time allowed for this work is so short that it is necessary to have a fairly large force of experienced workers in order to accomplish the work in the given time.

a — The General Secretary, who has charge of all arrangements, and is responsible for the safe conduct of all children.

b — The Chief Assistant, who is responsible for railroad tickets, etc.

c — Assistants, who are usually young college men and women, who attend to the immense mass of detail work connected with arranging the various lists, informing the children, etc.

These workers often begin as volunteers in the office, and in this way learn the details of the work.

d — Volunteers, who conduct parties of children to a farm and bring back returning parties. The volunteer should

be a person deeply interested in the work, because she has a very good opportunity to get side lights upon the work as she talks with the children going to and from the country, and with the people at the farm when she takes the different parties back and forth.

e — Investigator or Field Worker, who looks up the homes in the country where they are willing to entertain children. She tries to become the friend and adviser of the country people who are interested in this work.

(Many settlements and other organizations arrange for the summer outings for their own special groups of children. This is in no way connected with the work of the Country Week, but arrangements are made to avoid an unwise duplication of vacations.)

(b) The Floating Hospital Ship.

This work provides care for children who are ill or ailing by enabling mothers to take these children to spend the day on the ship, which makes daily trips down the harbor.

Workers employed on the ship are trained nurses or young medical students. Sometimes volunteers may be used for the day to entertain the children who are well, but who cannot be left at home when the mother brings the sick baby.

(2) *Vacation schools for children.*

During the summer months vacation schools are maintained by the settlements and by private organizations. The purpose is to keep the children occupied in a pleasant and useful manner during the long vacation. In this group would fall also the vacation Bible schools, which have a distinctly religious tendency, but are similar in organization to the regular vacation schools.

The workers are usually young college women, who teach the children sewing, cooking, games, music, etc.

(3) *Playground work for children.*

In almost all communities playgrounds are being formed for the use of the children during the summer. Each playground has a regular supervisor, sometimes more than one. The playground is open for certain hours each day, and the children are taught how to play organized games, also simple dances, etc. The grounds are equipped with sand boxes, swings, and simple apparatus for exercise. On rainy days, if a shelter is provided, the playground supervisor tells the children stories and teaches them songs and action games.

Playground workers must have special training for the work, or must take positions as assistants to some experienced worker. The work is extending rapidly, and playground supervisors are in good demand during the summer.

3. THE PERSON: QUALITIES AND TRAINING.

a. QUALITIES.

(1) *For regular social work with children.*

Fondness for children, intelligence, judgment, imagination, physical strength, and constructive ability.

Special qualities necessary for the investigator: forcefulness, and ability to impress her personality quickly.

Special qualities necessary for the visitor: tact, ability to make friends with children, and ability to coöperate with people.

(2) *For the summer work for children.*

Magnetism and pleasing personality, enthusiasm, love for children, and ability to interest and control them easily, organizing ability, alertness, ingenuity, and strength.

b. TRAINING.

For every form of social work training of some sort is becoming more and more necessary. For the higher grade of positions it is essential.

(1) *For regular social work for children.*

A full course in the School for Social Workers or a similar school is the best equipment for this type of work. This course includes the theory of all social work, and allows the student to give practice work to the line in which she is most interested.

It may sometimes be possible to secure a position as an agent in training. Here a woman would receive only a nominal salary, but would be able to work under supervision and guidance. By supplementing this with some outside reading or a partial course in the school, she might get a practical training which would be considered as an equivalent to the regular training.

A volunteer giving full time may also be given similar training.

(2) *For special schools.*

A full course in the particular industrial subject which she wishes to teach. This should be supplemented by a course in social service.

(3) *For playground work.*

A good course in gymnastics, with normal

training in playground work. A teacher who has had regular kindergarten training might supplement this by practical work as assistant on the playground under an experienced supervisor.

4. THE PAY: POSITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

a. SALARIES.

- (1) Investigators, \$800-\$1,200.
- (2) Visitors, \$700-\$900.
- (3) Agents in Training, \$25-\$30 a month.
- (4) Teachers, \$700-\$900.
- (5) Fresh Air Workers :
Chief Assistants, \$900-\$1,100.
Assistants, \$10-\$14 a week for the summer months.
Field Workers, probably the same as regular investigators.
- (6) Vacation School Workers, \$8-\$10 a week for the summer months.
- (7) Playground Workers :
Organizers, \$10-\$15 a week for the summer months.
Assistants, \$8-\$10 a week for the summer months.

b. OPPORTUNITIES.

Work for children is one of the most interesting forms of social service for the college woman. For a woman who has training and some experience, there are good opportunities in this type of work ; and for the woman who wishes to enter some form of social service, but is unable to secure a training course, there are occasionally some opportunities to begin the work as an agent in training with those children's agencies which are equipped to give the necessary supervision.

In summer there are many openings, but usually there are also many college women and teachers who wish to do this kind of work. For the vacation work it is usually necessary to secure experience as a volunteer in the work ; then later such

a worker is able to take a more important position with pay.

In the vacation schools regular teachers or young college women are often employed. There is a fair demand for these workers, though the salary is small.

In the playground work the demand is increasing. The work demands training and experience, but, given these, there is an increasing opportunity to take charge of playgrounds in the cities and towns. In many communities preference is given to graduates from their own normal schools and to their regular teachers.

5. CENSUS BUREAU REPORTS.

In the 12th (1900) United States Census Reports no special classification is made for social workers.

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